

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

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STADIS //////////////////////////////////////
FOR AMBASSADOR JORDEN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, PN

SUBJECT: HEINZ-TORRIJOS CORRESPONDENCE

1. SENATOR HEINZ HAS GIVEN US A LETTER TO YOU ASKING
THAT YOU DELIVER THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM HIM TO
GENERAL TORRIJOS. ORIGINAL TEXT OF LETTERS BEING POUCHED.
TEXT OF LETTER TO GENERAL TORRIJOS FOR DELIVERY TO HIM
FOLLOWS:

2. BEGIN QUOTE UNITED STATE SENATE, WASHINGTON D.C.

FEBRUARY 20, 1978

BRIGADIER GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS HERRERA
CHIEF OF THE GOVERNMENT AND COMMANDER
OF THE NATIONAL GUARD
REPUBLIC OF PANAMA
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DEAR GENERAL TORRIJOS:

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR PROMPT AND THOUGHTFUL REPLY
TO MY LETTER OF JANUARY 31. I APPRECIATE YOUR CLARIFI-
CATION OF PANAMANIAN LAW AND YOUR RENEWED COMMITMENT TO

MOVE FORWARD WITH THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION THAT WILL PERMIT POLITICAL PARTIES TO FUNCTION FREELY.

HOWEVER, LET ME COME DIRECTLY TO THE POINT: MY ORIGINAL QUESTION TO YOU WHEN WE MET WAS WHETHER THIS LEGISLATION WOULD BE ENACTED WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. YOUR VERBAL RESPONSE WAS THAT IT WOULD TAKE PLACE BEGIN UNDERSCORE "MUCH SOONER THAN THAT" END UNDERSCORE. I REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT THE QUESTION OF TIMING.

YOUR LETTER SAYS '... WE HAVE PROPOSED TO TAKE ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS IN ORDER THAT THE LEGISLATION WHICH REGULATES POLITICAL PARTIES CAN BE ENACTED BEGIN UNDERSCORE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE' END UNDERSCORE. YOU THEN GO ON TO SAY, "IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, WE WILL PROCEED TO THE ELECTIONS ..."

THESE TWO STATEMENTS LEAD ME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE RETURN OF POLITICAL PARTIES TO PANAMA MAY NOT OCCUR AS SOON AS I HAD PREVIOUSLY BELIEVED. I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT THE ENACTMENT OF SUCH LEGISLATION MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTION -- OUR OWN CONGRESS SELDOM MOVES THAT FAST -- BUT I AM TROUBLED THAT YOUR LETTER LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH LEGISLATION MAY NOT BE ENACTED WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AS WE ORIGINALLY DISCUSSED. IT IS WITH RESPECT TO THIS POSSIBILITY THAT I SEEK FURTHER CLARIFICATION: CAN YOU STATE, POSITIVELY AND WITHOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESERVATION, THAT SUCH LEGISLATION WILL BE ENACTED WITHIN FIVE YEARS, OR FOR THAT MATTER, "MUCH SOONER THAN THAT"?

I THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR EARLIER REPLY, BUT I AM SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE NECESSITY OF MY WRITING TO YOU ONCE MORE AND THAT YOU CAN FULLY APPRECIATE MY INTEREST IN HAVING THIS MATTER CLARIFIED.

SINCERELY,

H. JOHN HEINZ, III
UNITED STATES SENATE END QUOTE VANCE

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